

トックピジンの語彙の複雑性

クレイグ・アラン・フォルカー

How Complex is the Tok Pisin Lexicon?

Craig Alan Volker

Abstract

Because of its origins in a master-servant colonial environment, and because of the perception of pidgin languages as “simple”, the general public in Papua New Guinea tends to think of Tok Pisin (Papua New Guinea Pidgin English) as a “primitive” language without the complexities of natural languages, and therefore not suitable for “real” communication. This perception is examined using research into the universal patterns of complexity found in the taxonomies of the semantic fields of colour, zoological, botanical, and geometric shape terminology. This research has shown that languages develop terminology in these fields in universal patterns of increasing complexity. In all four semantic fields, Tok Pisin ranks high in the degree of specialised complexity of the terminology available to its speakers. This indicates that Tok Pisin has a more complex lexicon than many non-pidgin languages in the world and that the common perception of the language as being “too simple” for efficient communication is false.

使用者と奴隷の植民地環境を起源に、またピジン言語は簡素なものだと受け止められていたことから、パプアニューギニアの人々は一般にピジンイングリッシュは自然な言語のような複雑さがない原始的な言語だと考え、現実のコミュニケーションには向いていないととらえていた。この一般概念は、色や動植物、幾何学模様の専門用語を意味の上から分類すると見られる複雑性について、普遍的なパターンを調べることから検討してみることができる。この調査から、言語はより複雑になっていく普遍的なパターンとして、これらの分野の専門用語を発達させていくことがわかった。上記三つの分野では、トックピジンは専門用語の複雑さは高度に特化されている。これは、トックピジンはピジン言語以外の世界の多言語よりもより複雑な語彙があり、効率的な言語にしては簡素すぎるという一般の概念が誤っていることを示している。

Folk wisdom in Papua New Guinea would have it that Tok Pisin (Papua New Guinea Pidgin English) is a “primitive” language that cannot be used to communicate complex ideas. Both expatriates and indigenes often make claims(which they usually do not back up with linguistic proofs)that it would be impossible to differentiate details of thought in Tok Pisin to the degree necessary for communication in the modern world. This is an interesting hypothesis for linguists since, while pidgin languages are by definition simplified in comparison with non-pidgin languages, Tok Pisin is unusual among pidgin languages in being not only a means of everyday communication, but also a means of communicating for the purposes of artistic self-expression, magic, religion, linguistic play, and taboo, not only for the minority of speakers for whom it has

become creolised, but also for the vast majority of speakers for whom it is a second language (Mühlhäusler 1979)

In contrast to this “gut feeling”, we have the findings of Witkowski and Brown (1978) that, in general, the more complex a society becomes, the more detailed is the evolution of the encoding sequences of terms in its language(s) for ideas in any one sphere of knowledge. As a product of the contact of increasingly complex and interrelated societies, one would therefore expect Tok Pisin to have relatively highly evolved systems of encoding sequences in its lexicon. This hypothesis can be tested by examining the complexity of terms in the Tok Pisin lexicon with universally observed patterns of the development of complexity in natural languages; because languages develop increasingly specialised vocabulary in at least certain fields in universally recognised patterns, the complexity of the Tok Pisin lexicon in these fields can indicate the level of complexity of the lexicon as a whole. By looking at several areas in which there is general agreement as to the universal sequence of expansion of encoding sequences, one can have an objective measure of how detailed the Tok Pisin encoding sequences are. This is a first step in addressing the folk wisdom about Tok Pisin in a less superficial fashion than is normally the case. Furthermore, it is possible to suggest future avenues of research that can clarify this point more fully.

The primary sources of information for the data used in this paper are the intuitions of three speakers of Tok Pisin, one (the author) a speaker of the Highlands dialect, one a speaker from the Morobe Province on the New Guinea mainland coast, and one a speaker from New Britain. These three speakers represent the three main dialect areas of Tok Pisin. Reference has also been made to the following three written sources: Mihalic’s *Jacaranda Dictionary* (1971) which is admittedly woefully incomplete, but still the best dictionary of the language, the revised Bible Society translation of the New Testament and Psalms (1980), which has set the standard for the written form of Tok Pisin, and the style sheet for *Wantok* newspaper, the national Tok Pisin weekly (Mihalic 1982 ?)

It should be pointed out that all these sources may be unreliable to some extent since all three speakers and all the writers of the texts are bilingual in English, the main source language or in Muhlhausler’s terminology, the main lexifier, of Tok Pisin. These speakers may therefore give a different range of meanings to words with English cognates than would the majority of Tok Pisin speakers who do not know English. Cognates from all lexifiers (English, German, Malay, Latin, or the Kuwana language of the Tolais of East New Britain) differ in several ways in Tok Pisin; some have only a subset of the lexical information of the original (e.g., *Bruder* in German means a male sibling or a member of a religious order, but in Tok Pisin only the latter) others have a much wider meaning in Tok Pisin than in the original language (e.g., *lek* from English *leg* means not only “leg”, but also “foot”) and all have been modified to suit the now relatively stable lexical patterns of modern Tok Pisin, including its redundancy reducing rules (Mühlhäusler 1979)

The case of a Tok Pisin speaker who is bilingual in English is rather different from that of someone who is bilingual in Tok Pisin and, say, Kuanua or German. Today there is a definite boundary between Tok Pisin and those languages, a boundary that is not so clear between English and Tok Pisin. This boundary is blurred because of the use of English as the major official language of Papua New Guinea and by the fact that, with the exception of *Wantok* newspaper, there is no body in the country actively trying to coin new words and phrases for the many new items with which Tok Pisin speakers must cope. Of the two non-marginal Tok Pisin sociolects mentioned by Mühlhäusler (Urban Pidgin and Rural Pidgin), Urban Pidgin, which has both the

greater number of English speakers and the greater exposure to new ideas which need new names, has the fuzziest distinction between English and Tok Pisin. Many speakers of Urban Pidgin, even if they have returned to a rural setting, sprinkle their Tok Pisin with so many anglicisms that their speech is often incomprehensible to their rural cousins. A perfect example of this is the letter this writer saw from an agricultural extension officer, who wrote a village leader that he wanted to come on a particular day to “*helpim agrikultural ekstensen projek wok*” in the village. Small wonder so few persons were waiting for him!

It is common practice in Papua New Guinea to assume that Rural Pidgin is the standard, even though it does not have the prestige of the more anglicised Urban Pidgin. This makes sense, since rural speakers construction be understood by urban dwellers, while the reverse is not always true. But even in *Wantok* newspaper whose style book has many pages devoted to avoiding unnecessary English loanwords by coining new phrases such as *susokman* (shoe-sock-man) for white collar worker, one now sees *gel* (from English *girl*) rather than older *meri* (from *Mary*), *yut klap* (English *youth club*) rather than *klap bilong ol yangpela* (“club of the young ones”), and *nonfomal edukesen* rather than *tok ples skul* (“talk place = vernacular school”).

In this regard it is interesting to note that often it is fluent expatriate speakers (as opposed to those who use what Mühlhäusler calls the marginal sociolect “Tok Masta”), rather than educated indigenous speakers, who make the most conservative and concrete division between English and Tok Pisin. The attitude of many educated indigenous speakers of Urban Pidgin is that of an indigenous informant who assisted with this paper. When asked if Tok Pisin has for “square”, he said that while older people in a village would not understand the English word *square*, if he wanted to say something was square, he would just say *skwea*. An expatriate informant on the other hand said that there was no word for “square” and so he would say *samting i luk olsem* (“something that looks like this”) and draw a picture in the dirt or in the air.

Thus in an investigation such as this, one needs to be careful to include only those Tok Pisin terms which are comprehensible to the majority of the speakers of the language. If one accepts all the terms used by urban dwellers, one could end up by simply writing a description of the lexicon of English rather than that of Tok Pisin.

A second problem in attempting such a study is that while there have been many ethnoscientific studies of taxonomies of semantic fields in many diverse languages, the number of statements of universality that have been made is still rather small. Witkowski and Brown (1978) make reference only to the universals of the taxonomies of colour terms, zoological terms, botanical terms and geometric shapes. Until more statements of universality in other fields have been made and tested, it will not be possible to make a definitive general statement about the complexity of Tok Pisin. This discussion will limit itself to an examination of only these four semantic fields.

We can begin by looking at the terms in the language for various colours. Because of the contribution of Berlin and Kay’s pioneering work on the taxonomies of colour terms, perhaps more attention has been paid to the universal principles of the evolution of colour terms than to any other area. In Witkowski and Brown’s work (1978 : 439) we find the following revision of the Berlin-Kay colour encoding sequence of a language, which allows one to place the colour encoding sequence of a language into one of seven progressively more complex stages:

- I. Macro-white and Macro-black
- II. Macro-red
- III. “Grue”(green or blue)or yellow
- IV. Both grue and yellow
- V. Both green and blue
- VI. Brown
- VII. Pink, orange, purple

An encoding sequence for “grey” appears anywhere in stages III to VI.

Thus within this taxonomy, any language with a term for “brown”, for example, will have terms for “green”, “blue”, “yellow”, “red”, white”, and “black” as well as possibly “grey”, but not necessarily “pink”, orange”, “purple” and “grey”.

Tok Pisin has words for all the colours listed in stages one through six except grey:

- I. “white” *wait* (-*pela*), “black” *blak* (-*pela*)
- II. “red” *ret* (*pela*)
- III. “yellow” *yelo* (-*pela*)
- IV. “blue” *blu* (-*pela*)
- V. “green” *grin* (-*pela*)
- VI. “brown” *braun* (-*pela*)

It is interesting that all these colour terms have English lexifiers, although the words for “brown” and “green” could also have come from their German cognates *braun* and *grün*, respectively.

There are no words for any of the stage seven terms(“pink”, “orange”, or “purple”). This is surprising since 60% of the children in the country now receive at least some primary schooling(Ride 2000)and in theory are expected to know the English terms “orange” and “purple” by the end of grade six.

Another area that has attracted much attention has been the study of biological life-forms, and the study of the taxonomies of Papua New Guinean languages has been the source of many insights. In Witkowski and Brown(1978 : 438)we find the following chart adapted from data in an unpublished paper by C.H. Brown (1978)showing the progression of differentiating zoological life-forms. This figure ignores the binary encoding “large X” / “small X” common in many languages, including Tok Pisin.

- I. -III. “fish”, “bird”, “snake”
- IV. “wug”
- V. “mammal”

A “wug” is any animal that is not a fish, bird, or snake. When a language develops a term for “mammal”, “wug” becomes “small animal that is not a fish, bird, or snake” and “mammal” is “a large animal that is not a fish, bird, or snake”.

Tok Pisin is at stage IV in this taxonomy. It has all three stage I-III terms: *pis* “fish”, *pisin* “bird”, and

snek “snake and worm”. It further differentiates “wug into *binatang* “bugs, small creeping animals, and obnoxious children” and *abus* “game animals or meat”. Many speakers now use the English loanword *enimal* rather than *abus*, perhaps because the word *abus*, a word of Kuanua origin, means “game” and there are now recently introduced animals such as horses or, through films and books, African animals to which people need to refer, but which they do not normally have a chance to eat. In addition, for some speakers *abus* can also refer to edible fish as well as edible land game.

Related to the concept of zoological life-forms is the concept of botanical life-forms. Witkowski and Brown give the following figure adapted from information analysed by Brown(1977) which classifies languages into six stages of lexical development in this area:

- I. no life term terms
- II. “tree”
- III. “grerb”
- IV. -VI. “bush”, vine” and “grass”

A “grerb” is a small chiefly herbaceous(green, leafy, non-woody)plant, i.e., until stage IV-VI terms are developed, any none-tree plant. A bush is a plant that is between a tree and a grerb in size.

In this area Tok Pisin has at least a stage V vocabulary and has thus developed an encoding sequence that is relatively complex compared with many other languages. In addition to the word *diwai* “tree”, there are words for “vine” *rop* and “grass” *gras* or, in the Highlands in particular, *kunai*, which in other areas is a species-specific rather than generic term. There is no separate word for “bush”, only the binary opposite “small tree” *liklik diwai* / “big tree” *bikpela diwai*. The term *bus*, which is derived from English *bush*, means “forest” or “jungle”.

The last area mentioned by Witkowski and Brown is geometric shapes. They quote Burris(1973)as saying that a language can be classified as being in one of at least three stages in the evolution of encoding geometric shapes:

- I. No geometric terms
- II. “Circle” only
- III. Both “circle” and “square”

Tok Pisin is at least at stage II, since all speakers use the word *raun* for “round” or “circle”, especially in compounds such as *raunwara* “lake”(literally “round water”)and *raunhaus* “a traditional Highlands-style round house”. The problems with allowing *skwea* have been mentioned above. It is probably best to be conservative and not yet recognise Tok Pisin as being at stage III in this taxonomy.

From this initial investigation we can see that Tok Pisin has undergone more evolution in its taxonomic complexity than many “natural” languages. In a seven-level scale of complexity of colour terms, Tok Pisin has all the terms for the first six levels. On a five-level scale of complexity of differentiating zoological life-forms, it has all the terminology of the first four levels. On a six-level scale of increasing complexity of botanical terms, Tok Pisin has terminology for all of the first five levels. And on a three-level scale of the de-

velopment of geometric shape terminology, Tok Pisin is on at least the second level.

This degree of semantic differentiation shows that a naïve dismissal of the language as being primitive does not seem appropriate. Even though it does not have the lexical complexity of English, it does have a more differentiated lexicon than many of the world's natural languages.

References

- Bible Society of PNG, trans. 1980. *Nupela Testamen na ol Sam*. Port Moresby: Bible Society of Papua New Guinea.
- Brown, C.H. 1977. Folk botanical life-forms: their universality and growth. *American Anthropologist* 1979 : 317-42.
- . 1978. Lexical universals and the human language faculty. In M. Saviile-Troike(ed.)*Georgetown University Round Table of Languages and Linguistics 1977*. 75-91. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Burris, H.W. 1978. A cross-linguistic study of the growth of geometric figure terminology. *Journal of Anthropology*. 1(2).
- Mihalic, Frank. 1971. *The Jacaranda dictionary of Melanesian Pidgin*. Milton, Queensland: Jacaranda Press.
- . 1982? . *Buk bilong Wantok Niuspepa*. Boroko, Papua New Guinea: Word Publishing.
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 1979. *The growth and development of the lexicon of New Guinea Pidgin*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics Series C.
- Ride, Anouk. 2000. Papua New Guinea. *New Internationalist*. 329 : 36.
- Witkowski, Stanley and Cecil Brown. 1976. Lexical universals. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 7 : 427-51.